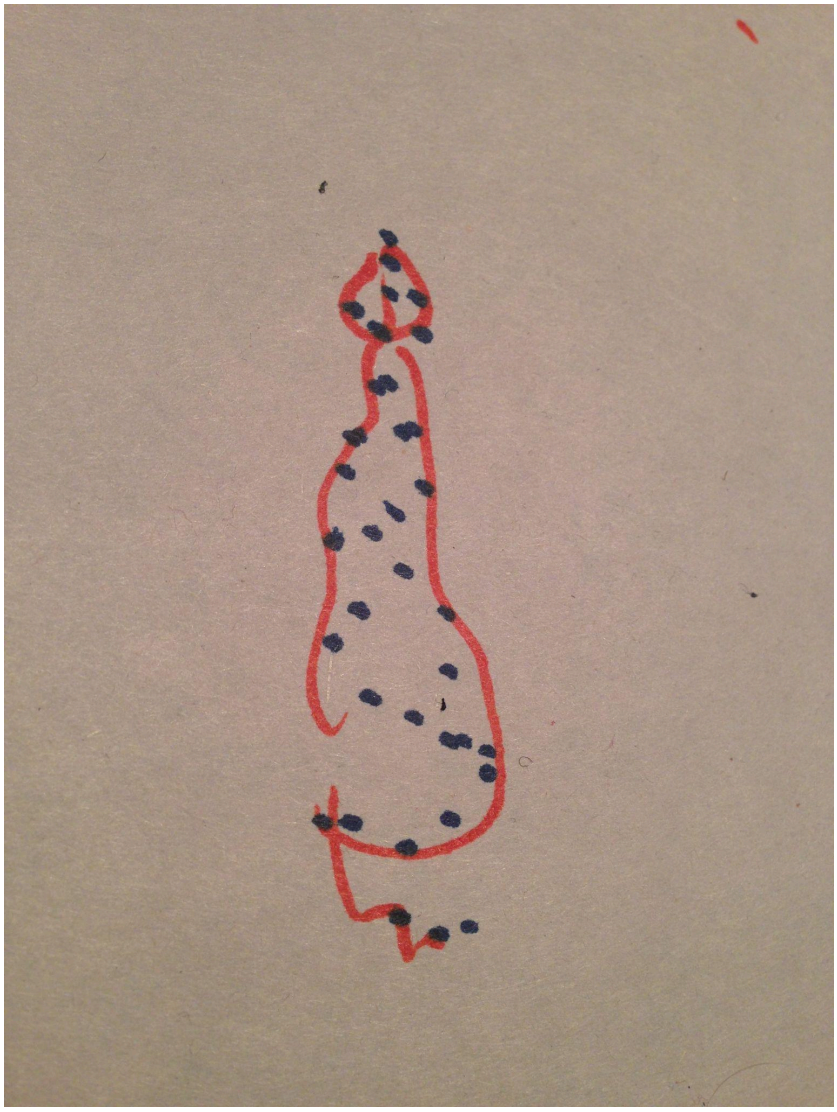
Coherency: Somatics, Dance, and Writing Symposium



Margit Galanter

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This is a page position paper I wrote in preparation for the Somatics, Dance, and Writing Symposium taking place February 2011 in Ann Arbor, MI. Organized by a whole team and headed by Petra Kuppers, the event included shared discussions, presentations, movement facilitations, and more. As part of the seminars, Robert Kocik and I also offered a participatory presentation, Enheartening. Here is the paper:

Coherency

– Margit Galanter

Just as we have inherited Cartesianism, so, too, we can expose its fallibility. The weight and power of the split is insidious; it creeps into discussions on artistic practice, it rears its head during physical acts. It's a member of the fertile landscape where movement and language meet.

In our practices – which may in a given moment span the rarified, the generic, as well as the unique – how do we address the coherency of a being-in-environment?

As a somatic practitioner, I bring this quest to the table. My work includes supporting that which is silently in the room, waking up some dormant aspects, and also witnessing what is without having to fix it. At the end of a session, our voices have necessarily changed. As a movement investigator and dance poet, I live in the interstices where forms intersect, conjoin, and break away. I compose from languages that emerge through making something. It is not so simple as the maker and the thing made; novelty has brought new progeny and unions.

Recent medical research experiments use light, color, and sound to mend human tissue. This is a reinstantiation of what some artists and mystics have struggled to keep alive all along.

What is the experience of integration? What does it take to provide a context that enables the complex, awkward, and multi-varied being to coalesce and sense his/her/their self? How to invite the transmediary voices, to support the spark that ignites a creative process? What invokes curiosity where habituated and limited notions of a self-image dwell?

We are not skin and bones, nor are we a brain, nor senses, nor hands-to-the-keyboard with a set of eyes-to-edit, nor our pain, though at times any of these functions might rise to the surface. Rather, we come with a complex of states, systems, vibes, and utterances. All these uniquely form the being at a given moment. They organize based on our intention and

attention to formulate the actions we conduct. There is a constant flux in feedback with the environment. The somatic experience is necessarily social, and necessarily experiential, both.

Most saliently these days, the work I practice fits into a realm I call inscriptions. In its most basic description, it refers to embodied language, or language-through-dance. It is my own kind of 'writing.' Though the terms only get at a trace of the practice, they allude to the richness of the crossing of forms that carve the image space.

Writing: I use the term 'writing' to refer to action that seems to elicit an inscription in the body/environment. It need not be words on page, though it certainly can be. It may also be a whole body drawing, a particular tone on a piano, or the description of something that interrupts a previously felt sense of spatiality thereby shifting the image. Re-membering.

In the studio: we gave up on the formalities of Authentic Movement after almost a full round and shared the dance space for 13 minutes. Each of us on our own started to make sounds. For me, ugly growls that I didn’t hold back, a mobile tongue connected virtually to my perineal pumping. Whole-body yawning. A shared spontaneous moment of total silence. The sounds shifted into long tones, and I had very little urge to move because the tones moved me and moved through me. In my experience, they were clearing out the noxious gunk that had been collecting, and what emerged was a sense of light and spaciousness that could come through. After this, my voice came down almost an octave.

It was in fact after that process where dance, writing, and a somatic experience met that I was even able to write this page at all.